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ment of the city boss," is with us this morning and perhaps will speak to us on that broader aspect of the question.

Mr. HAMILTON: Mr. President, ladies and gentlemen: I should hesitate very much to put my own theoretical ideas on this question against either those of Miss Tyler, or against your personal experiences of the commission form of government, as some of you have had it in your capacity as librarians. I could not add very much, if anything, to what Miss Tyler has said on the general question. I don't believe that even Governor Woodrow Wilson himself could have given a more statesman-like summary of this question than Miss Tyler has given and I will ask her to remember that I don't offer this as an argument for women's suffrage. I am willing that you draw your own conclusions. As to the question of including the educational side of the community's work with the political, under the commission form of government, I agree with those in Des Moines who think that ought to be done. I heard a very interesting address by Governor Wilson at Los Angeles a few evenings ago, in which he discussed the question of communities putting all their eggs in one basket, and then watching that basket, and I believe in doing that very thing. I think the educational and library work ought to be put in the full blaze of publicity along with the city's government, in cities having the commission form of government. I think there is no better information that your Association could get along this line than the individual experience of librarians in commission governed cities. You certainly have that which is of more value than I could offer.

The CHAIRMAN: The question of "The relation between the library and the municipality" is really the main topic of the morning, and we shall revert to the question suggested by the latter part of Miss Tyler's paper, the question of the administration of civil service, later, but now is the time to take up, according to the printed program, the question of branch library problems and I have the pleasure of introducing to you Mr. CHARLES H. BROWN,

assistant librarian of the Brooklyn public library, who will speak on

LIMITATIONS OF THE BRANCH LIBRARIAN'S INITIATIVE

As good American citizens we have from our earliest days been thoroughly imbued with the spirit of Patrick Henry, "Give me liberty, or give me death." We as librarians have sometimes applied this motto to our professional work, holding up before ourselves as our ideal, independent positions. We dislike to be limited in our work in any way, and it is possible we may at times spend many minutes in thinking how much more successful our libraries would be if we were not hampered by what we may at times consider necessary evils, such as boards of trustees, chief librarians and and in our larger libraries superintendents of departments. It cannot be denied that there are many advantages in allowing heads of libraries, whether they be branch librarians or librarians of independent city libraries freedom of action. Why should not branch librarians be given the same privilege of initiative which the chief librarians expect in dealing with their boards? Those directly in charge of branches know the immediate needs of their own communities better than those at the head of large systems of libraries, many of which have to deal with different types and races of people. An over-centralized system may involve the loss of originality and what is worse the loss of enthusiasm and interest among the assistants. Even in these days of mechanical progress a machine will not do as a reference librarian or a loan desk attendant. If the decision of the small every-day problems which are continually arising must wait until some administrative officer, usually several miles away, can be consulted, we shall have continual trouble and vexation of spirit not only on the part of the assistants immediately concerned, but also of the public. On the other hand, it is obvious that there are many reasons why it is inexpedient for a branch to be entirely independent of its neighbors, as if it were in

another city. The economic loss in doing the work of ordering, accessioning and cataloging the same title 25 or 30 times instead of once, the confusion to the public through different rules in different branches and the unnecessary duplication of books are a few of the many arguments against a decentralized system which will at once occur to us. How far, then, can we retain the advantages of decentralization and independent administration without injury to the service? To what extent must the initiative of the branch librarian be limited? Is it feasible to increase or decrease the limitation of freedom of action and what are the corresponding gains and losses?

It may be of interest to compare in a few points the administration of a branch library with that of an independent city library. How much of the authority that is usually given to the head of a city library can be given to a branch librarian? What are the agreements and what are the differences in the underlying conditions? How much actual and absolute independence of action can be given to the one and not to the other? Let us take as a basis of comparison branches and independent libraries of about the same circulation. At the head of the independent city library is the board of trustees with its various committees on administration, books, buildings, etc., to which the recommendations of the librarian are submitted. The branch librarian on the other hand has as her superior officers the chief librarian and the heads of departments to whom her recommendations may be submitted. The chief librarian is an expert in library economy; the trustees usually are not. The assistants are appointed and removed in the one case by the board or a committee of the board after recommendation by the librarian; in the second case the branch librarian may or may not make recommendations as to the appointment or transfer of the assistants employed in a branch. The rules and regulations for the public are in the case of the independent library fixed by the board upon the recommendation of the librarian; the assistant

in charge of a branch may or may not make recommendations to her superior officers as to changes of rules. In relation to other libraries and institutions there is a marked difference. The independent library does not usually have to consider the limitation of scope due to other libraries in the same city doing the same general work; the branch library must bear this continually in mind. The main difference, however, is in the amount of money available for library purposes. The circulation of the larger branches in New York and Brooklyn, such as Seward Park, Brownsville and Bushwick, compares not unfavorably in number with such cities as Worcester, Denver, Providence, Springfield, Grand Rapids and New Haven. The population of the districts reached by those branches varies from 50,000 to 150,000, as does the population of the cities mentioned, with the exception of Denver, which is larger. But the amount of money available for the support of these branches is, roughly speaking, in each case about one-half the library appropriation of the cities, even if the cost of the administration of the central office is distributed proportionally among the branches. This means in the case of the branches smaller buildings, fewer assistants and lower salaries. As the circulation is the same and requires the services of the same number of assistants in both cases, there will obviously be in the case of the branch library a smaller force available for other routine work.

Now to what an extent do these differences limit the comparative freedom of action of the branch librarian, and how far do the agreements permit it. Let us take it as granted that it is desirable to give the branch librarian as much initiative as is consistent with economical administration and satisfactory service to the public. Bearing these facts in mind, it is not difficult to come to some general conclusions with regard to the administration of a large system of branches.

In the first place, the fact that the money available for a branch is much less than that for an independent city library

with the same circulation, must involve certain economies of coöperative administration. The saving in cataloging and accessioning at the general office is considerable and cannot be ignored. In the ordering of books and supplies there is even a greater economy in having the work done at one place for the entire system, for by this means larger discounts may be obtained through the purchase of large quantities at one time. However, this routine work is not such as affects the initiative of the branch librarian to any great extent, provided certain essentials of this work are left largely to her discretion. These essentials are first, recommendation as to the selection of books and supplies, second, the addition in cataloging of certain subject headings such as may be in her opinion needed in her special branch. In the selection of books the branch librarian may not have the knowledge possessed by the head of an independent library. The former receives less salary and has a narrower experience. But, knowing her own community with its various factories and industries, she should be given the initiative as to what books should go into her special branch. Her recommendations may well be examined at the central office, as the recommendations of the independent librarian are examined by his book committee. This is the more essential in the case of the branch library, as the chief librarian, while he may not know the 40 or 50 different communities of his city, does have a better knowledge of the value of various books and editions. The same argument applies to additional subject headings. In a general book on technology a bibliography of steel works management may be worth a subject heading in a library near the steel mills. The addition of such subject headings and the analysis of special articles or chapters may well be left to the branch librarian, if the headings selected by her are approved by the head of the cataloging department. It follows, therefore, that although a certain part of the routine work must for purposes of economy be done in the central office, yet this

centralization does not necessarily lessen the branch librarian's initiative.

In regard to the personnel, it has been found necessary in the larger libraries to conduct training classes for embryo librarians. It is not possible, even if it were desirable, for each individual branch with its small force to conduct its own school, but the apprentices may be given experience in various branches, and the branch librarian allowed an opportunity to report and recommend as to their appointment. In the case of an undesirable assistant, the branch librarian may have even more opportunity for initiative than the independent librarian, for it is far easier for the former to transfer an assistant from one branch to another than it is for the latter to make an absolute dismissal. The branch librarian should know the efficiency of her various assistants and should be encouraged to report upon them to the chief librarian. If this be done, her initiative as to the personnel of her force does not compare so unfavorably with other librarians and is superior to the privileges many librarians enjoy under city civil service rules.

The reference work is another department which calls for decentralization. Each branch should have its own reference collection. Although it must of necessity be smaller than that of the independent library with its larger building and greater income, yet it should be sufficient to answer most of the questions that are asked. The remaining inquiries call for coöperation. If the information sought cannot be given at the branch, the reader should be referred to the central building or the question should be forwarded to the chief reference librarian for investigation and report. This, however, is not so much a case of centralization as of coöperation, and would be found to a less extent perhaps in our larger libraries.

The rules and regulations for the public must involve some degree of centralization, although even here the initiative of the branch librarian may not be necessarily limited. It is clearly desirable to allow the public to use different branches

if they wish. This involves some uniformity as to registration, charging systems, etc. It also implies uniformity as to certain regulations. It will not do to allow persons in one branch to take out 5 books at one time for 3 months, and in another branch a mile away to limit them to one book for 2 weeks. This uniformity does not imply, however, a central registration office. The branch librarian may well be given charge of her own registered list of patrons, thus keeping in closer touch with the people of her community. As the librarian makes recommendations to his board as to changes of rules, so should the branch librarian be encouraged to study and recommend any amendments to the regulations of her own library. She has the further assurance that any improvement she can propose will benefit not only her special branch, but all the branches of the city. Thus she may be given a great incentive for originality and initiative.

So far, I have attempted to show that the opportunities for initiative of a branch librarian do not necessarily compare unfavorably with those of the independent librarian. While a certain portion of the routine work for purposes of economy must be done in a central office, yet this does not affect necessarily the opportunities in branch work, and this centralization may be even a relief to the individual and thus an advantage to the public. Most of us will not consider that the decrease of routine work lessens our initiative.

Centralization does not mean uniformity along all lines. The individuality of the branch and the branch librarian must be retained. The branch librarian should and must study her community and the conditions in her neighborhood which may affect her branch, and should make recommendations embodying her conclusions. Different neighborhoods have different needs. A duplicate pay collection may be an excellent thing in a residential district and a total failure in Little Hungary. A collection of books in a Fifth Avenue branch on How to live on \$500 a year would be absurd. The branch librarian

should be given and should feel the responsibility for the success or failure of her branch. She should make recommendations to the administrative officers as to the selection of books, changes of rules, the personnel of her force, and the extension of the library's activities within her neighborhood, as the independent librarian makes his report to his trustees.

How may the initiative and originality of the assistants in a large system of branches be encouraged? It is possible to foster the spirit of coöperation among the branches of a system. Advice and counsel should be given in place of direct orders in so far as may be possible. The military system is not to be commended in library work. It is perfectly feasible to discuss any proposed changes at the meetings of the branch librarians, who should be encouraged to take part in such discussions. The assistants should be urged to recommend at any time possible improvements in the library service, and should feel free to talk over such recommendations informally with those at the head. If this is done the originality and interest of the assistant will not be lost; the decision of every small point need not be postponed. It is not sufficient to say, the "Work for the work's sake." It is the "Work for the public's sake." You all have heard of the library assistant who exclaimed when interrupted in her routine work by a reader: "If the public would only let us alone, we could get some work done."

Those of us who may be longing for independence should remember that there is no such thing as an absolutely independent position in library work or any other work. Sometimes I think independence is what we think the other fellow has and the other fellow thinks we have. The head of the library has his trustees and the city officials, who, with their civil service rules and their inclination to cut our budgets, can make more trouble than any chief librarian would ever dare to make. No one ever accomplished anything by thinking continually of the limitations in his work and by telling himself that opportunity has knocked and fled, never to

return. Opportunities are always with us; it is for us to see how we can make the best use of them.

The CHAIRMAN: The discussion of this subject will be continued by Miss CLARA E. HOWARD of the Carnegie library, Pittsburgh, who will speak on

THE BRANCH LIBRARY AND ITS RELATION TO THE DISTRICT

Within the past ten years the duties of a branch librarian in Pittsburgh have changed. When the branches were first opened it was found necessary to keep a great many records, but since the running machinery is in order, many of the details of the organization have been done away with. At present the only records kept are those which are not obtainable at the central library. The branches depend upon the central for figures of additions and number of volumes in their collections, and the central expects from the branches only those figures for which the branch is responsible. The monthly and annual statistical reports of each branch are now compiled in the central office where they have an adding machine. As much routine as possible has been done away with and as our books come to us already accessioned, shelflisted and cataloged it remains for us only to check our orders, file our cards and get our books into circulation.

The object of this change was, first to do away with unnecessary duplication of work, and secondly to give the branch librarian more time for field work which is much more vital. In some of the fundamental principles a certain amount of uniformity is required, but as the eight branch districts in Pittsburgh are so different and individual, it is the policy of the library to give the branch librarian full power to develop the district as she may see fit, so long as she keeps within her appropriation and the general policy of the library system. She has no limits except the physical ones, the size of her building and staff. She is made to feel that the library board and the librarian particularly are in

sympathy with what she is trying to do, and that she has their hearty coöperation. She becomes a part of the community in which she works, and is vitally interested in all its activities. In this respect a branch library closely resembles a library in a small community.

The Wylie Avenue Branch is situated in the heart of what is known as the "Hill District." At one time this was a very well-to-do part of Pittsburgh with substantial and well built homes, but for the most part this better class of people, the old families and even the lower middle class have left the district, and their places have been taken by foreigners and negroes. The homes were originally built for one or two families, but they have been changed to such an extent that we now find five or six families occupying the same building. Many of the parlors have been turned into storerooms and here we find tailors, grocers, butchers, bakers and toby-makers who make up the trades people of the neighborhood. The entire neighborhood is badly congested, and it is a common occurrence for a family to move five or six times a year in their efforts to find more livable quarters.

The nationalities represented at the branch are American, English, Jewish, Russian, German, Austrian, Italian, Roumanian, Hungarian, French, Negro, Scotch, and Irish. The district is essentially Jewish, but the people are divided into groups of German Jews, Russian Jews and Roumanian Jews, so there is a lack of community life and community interest. Few women among the foreigners use the library. Either they are suspicious of all reading on account of the years of oppression in their native land, or they have very little time from their household drudgery or they do not know how to read. The foreign men seem more anxious to get books in their native languages and read constantly. The library has been working to get a good collection of books in the foreign languages, as they are now looked upon as a means of establishing a home feeling in a new country where the foreigner can be brought into a sympathetic